

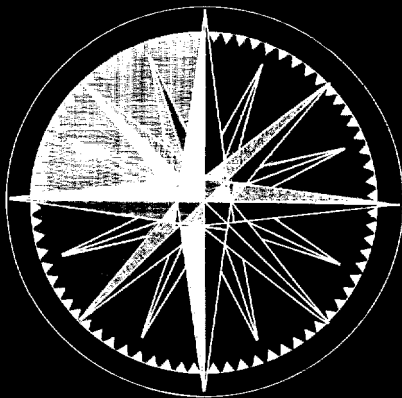
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SPECIAL REPORT

FRANCE'S DIALOGUE WITH THE SOVIET UNION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE



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FRANCE'S DIALOGUE WITH THE SOVIET UNION

The coincidence of views between France and the USSR on such international issues as Vietnam, the US role in Europe, and the powers of the UN has facilitated a dialogue between the two countries which has expanded in recent months. Paris and Moscow, however, remain in basic disagreement on important aspects of other vital questions, notably the German problem and disarmament. These differences, which could in time be aggravated by De Gaulle's efforts to extend France's influence into Eastern Europe, limit the possibilities for substantive accord at this time.

France, nonetheless, sees certain advantages in pursuing the current French-Soviet exchange. The most immediate consideration may be to ensure that Washington and Moscow will not attempt a settlement of the German problem without European concurrence. This remains a prime concern of De Gaulle's, despite the fact that the USSR sees no advantage in further pressures and maneuvers for a bilateral understanding with the US as the foundation for a "four-power agreement" on Germany. De Gaulle can also use his Soviet contacts to put the US, West Germany, and others on notice that the present world-power alignment is not immutable.

Over the long run, De Gaulle probably hopes that a continuing exchange will lay the groundwork for eventual negotiations on European questions between a French-led Western Europe and the Communist countries of Eastern Europe, looking toward their reincorporation into an over-all European framework. Only if a Bonn-Paris axis heading a viable European grouping failed to emerge, however, would France seriously consider an "alliance" with the Soviet Union.

A Developing Detente

The prospect of bilateral Franco-Soviet dealings cropped up in the mid-1950s but came to nothing. De Gaulle's return to power in 1958, however

set the stage for the present dialogue, although an early French initiative was delayed by the Berlin crisis, the Algerian war, and domestic political turmoil in France. Moscow's diplomatic recognition

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of the provisional Algerian government was premature from Paris' point of view and brought French relations with the USSR to a very low point. In addition, De Gaulle's efforts to create a firm Bonn-Paris unit as a pivotal force in a confederated Europe--an effort which was crowned by the 1963 Franco-German treaty--inhibited an expansion of Franco-Soviet contacts.

By early 1964 Franco-Soviet relations began to improve perceptibly. This was evidenced by an exchange of important visitors, by an expanded trade agreement, by an accord to collaborate on a color television system--in competition with a US system--and by a coincidence of views on a diplomatic solution to the Vietnam situation. Moscow's recent appointment of a diplomat of Valerian Zorin's rank as the new ambassador to Paris, followed by Gromyko's visit to Paris, brought the dialogue to the present high level.

Areas of Agreement

The shift in ambassadors emphasized the new importance the USSR seemed to attach to French relations. When Zorin presented his credentials in mid-April, De Gaulle responded with a speech stressing the absence of dispute between their two countries. He could easily have cited a number of instances in which their policies seem to run parallel.

In the UN, for example, Moscow and Paris are in accord

on some of the issues currently preoccupying that forum. Both reject the competence of the General Assembly to make binding assessments to finance peacekeeping operations and are on the same side in the Article 19 controversy concerning the loss of voting rights by members who fail to pay their assessed share of such operations. Both also insist that the UN "return to the Charter," arguing that the Security Council's power and functions have been usurped by the General Assembly in recent years.

Mutual apprehension over the possibility of a resurgent German militarism also leads to some convergence of Soviet and French views. Seen in the light of this mutual desire to limit Bonn's military power, Moscow's praise for De Gaulle's opposition to the creation of a multi-lateral nuclear force within NATO was not unexpected. Paris, however, does want a European nuclear-armed defense grouping including Germany, and opposes the MLF because it postpones this plan by perpetuating Europe's nuclear subservience to the US. Moscow, on the other hand, wants to forestall the development of any sort of nuclear defense arrangement giving Germany any active role.

The Vietnam situation is the most striking case in which the two countries hold similar views. In February, the Soviets saw an opportunity to probe the possibilities for negotiations on Vietnam by their endorsement of French appeals for a negotiated settlement. Although nothing concrete has come out of

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these exchanges, more probes are probably in the offing, particularly if a conference on Cambodia again gains favor.

Although a reduction of US power and prestige in Europe is a common objective of both France and the USSR, De Gaulle has no desire to have the US abandon its role as the guarantor of Europe's security. The American "nuclear umbrella" over Europe is the *sine qua non* for achievement of De Gaulle's policies. Neither would the USSR like to see a total withdrawal of American power from Europe. Soviet policy has long regarded a substantial US presence in Europe as a valuable check on the present and potential resurgence of West German power.

Areas of Disagreement

On Germany, De Gaulle accepts the Oder-Neisse line as Germany's eastern frontier, but has steadfastly refused to move toward recognition of East Germany. This would jeopardize the Franco-German rapprochement, which is essential to De Gaulle's long-range plans for France and Europe. Moreover, recognition, once granted, would eliminate a valuable bargaining lever with the USSR in any future discussions on Germany and European security.

France's refusal to sign the nuclear test ban treaty and to participate in multilateral disarmament negotiations did not meet with Soviet favor.

The Russians do not appear eager to move ahead in these fields, but further US-Soviet progress in disarmament would be a source of friction.

France, for some months now, has been cautiously developing closer cultural and economic ties with East European countries. This is in line with De Gaulle's oft-stated concept of a Europe reaching "from the Atlantic to the Urals." The USSR, however, will not tolerate any French attempt to press too far into the politics or security of the East European realm. Any such attempt would provoke strong Soviet resistance.

Advantages of a Dialogue

De Gaulle can have few illusions that Moscow sees an opportunity to disrupt the Western Alliance through France. He is confident, however, that he can use the dialogue with Moscow to bring some political advantage to France. Above all, De Gaulle believes that a limited rapprochement would give credence to his contention that France, by virtue of its position in Europe and leader of the "third world," must have a full voice in the disposition of all major international issues.

Ever present in De Gaulle's thinking is the belief that Eastern and Western Europe will inevitably draw together. When the time comes for an over-all European settlement, he wants to ensure that French views have

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the best possible audience.

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[REDACTED] A logical extension of this would be a European security pact with the USSR, which would fit in with De Gaulle's concept of an eventual pan-European arrangement under which a Germany if unified would be dependent on France for nuclear defense. In any event, the Bonn-Paris axis is still the touchstone in De Gaulle's plans. Only if he fails completely to achieve the lasting working relationship he envisages with West Germany will he consider looking to the USSR

for a renewal of the old anti-German alliance.

In Moscow's view, a dialogue with the French is aimed at encouraging an independent French policy which the Russians see as valuable support for their efforts to bury once and for all "four-power responsibility" for German reunification. From the USSR's vantage point, De Gaulle's policy in fact assumes indefinite partition of Germany and his outlook can only encourage trends toward redefining European political issues in terms of all-European security, limitations on German military power, and recognition of postwar frontiers.

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